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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000530

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [UN](#) [EU](#) [SU](#) [CD](#)
SUBJECT: CHAD OPPOSITION, PESSIMISTIC ABOUT ELECTION
PROSPECTS, BLAME PRESIDENT DEBY AND REJECT AMENDED DRAFT
LAWS

REF: A. NDJAMENA 517
[B](#). NDJAMENA 510
[C](#). NDJAMENA 200
[D](#). 07 NDJAMENA 675

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SUMMARY

[1](#). (C) The leaders of the main opposition parties told AMB November 12 that they are increasingly pessimistic that legislative and communal elections will be held in 2009, primarily because, absent external pressure, they say that President Deby has no real interest in electoral reform or the holding of fair elections. Four key draft electoral laws that had languished with the GOC were to be passed to the National Assembly November 13, but even if these were passed swiftly, it would still be difficult to assemble electoral machinery and conduct the two censuses -- demographic and electoral -- that needed to be completed before "scheduled" communal and legislative elections could take place before the end of 2009. The electoral reform process, they say, is less and less seen by President Deby as a personal priority, and the GOC and the ruling MPS party follow his lead obediently. The CPDC leaders said that Deby had shrewdly used the August 13 process "to buy time," and they pointed to a linkage between President Deby's enthusiasm for domestic political reform and his sense of security from external threat and vulnerability to external pressure. Deby responded to the near-destruction of his regime by rebels and his international partners' calls for change in February 2008 by naming a new PM and reenergizing the August 13 process. Now, with the military balance turning in his favor and with diplomatic efforts to end the Chad/Sudan "proxy war" proliferating (even as Sudan is distracted by the ICC issue, South Sudan issues, etc.), the leaders expressed some puzzlement at Deby's evident lack of enthusiasm for communal and local elections, as the well-financed and GOC-supported MPS was sure to do well in any such polling. On Thursday, November 13, the CPDC rejected the changes made to the draft laws by the GOC and the National Assembly.

[2](#). (C) The CPDC's rejection of the changed draft laws will set back progress toward the elections, but we do not know for how long. The EU Ambassador, who is the architect of the August 13 Accord and who has been supporting the implementation process financially and operationally (Ref B), continues to predict that there will be elections in 2009, as does the French Ambassador. It is difficult to discern which side is more responsible for the lack of progress on

the election calendar, whether the Deby regime is delaying the process and "playing for time" until it resolved its external security problems, or whether the Opposition's internal weakness and disunity contribute to its inability to push electoral events forward. We will continue to press the GOC and the MPS (as well as the CPDC) to work as hard as they can to ensure that these elections are held. END SUMMARY.

WORKING LUNCH, NOV 12

¶3. (U) The Ambassador hosted a lunch November 12 for the leaders of the coalition of opposition partners, the Coalition for the Defense of the Constitution (CPDC): Former President of the Republic Lol Mahamat Choua, Saleh Kebzabo, and Salibou Garba, both leaders of parties adhering to the CPDC. POLMIL and POLECON officers also attended.

OPPOSITION INCREASINGLY PESSIMISTIC

¶4. (C) The CPDC leaders expressed increasing pessimism about the progress of the electoral reform process set forth in the August 13 (2007) Accord agreed by the Deby Government, the ruling MPS party and the opposition CPDC and the prospects for credible communal and legislative elections in 2009 and for credible presidential polling in 2011. They said that the four main draft electoral laws had been submitted months ago to the Government, which had now indicated that it would send them on to the National Assembly for final approval on Thursday, November 13. Besides the GOC's delay in acting on the drafts, the CPDC chiefs expressed fear that both the Government and the National

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Assembly would make changes to key elements of the drafts. "If the GOC doesn't gut the laws, the National Assembly will," they charged. If either of them did, the CPDC would denounce the changed drafts publicly. They explained that the drafts had been approved earlier by the Comite de Suivi, the Implementing Committee of the August 13 Accord, in which both the Government and MPS had participated and in which they enjoy two-thirds of the votes.

¶5. (C) The CPDC chiefs agreed it is now "practically impossible" to hold legislative and communal elections in ¶2009. Besides the issue of the four draft electoral laws still to be resolved, there were two different censuses to be conducted -- a demographic census followed by an electoral census. The former would take six months (it is now scheduled to be completed in May), the latter at least as long. Looking out from November 2008, that would make elections impossible before this time next year -- even without factoring in contingencies like another rebel attack, an early and wetter 2009 rainy season, etc.

POLITICAL WILL IS LACKING

¶6. (C) The CPDC chiefs regretfully ascribed the difficulties in the August 13 process to lack of political will on the part of their "partners" in the enterprise -- the GOC and the MPS. This was just another way of saying that the process was less and less seen by President Deby as a personal priority and the GOC and the MPS followed his lead obediently. the CPDC leaders said that they doubted that Deby was ever fully committed to domestic political reform: he "used the August 13 process to buy time," in the words of Choua. The leaders speculated that the various delays that have plagued the reform process and election preparations are stalling tactics intended to push the legislative and communal elections so far into the future that it will not make sense to hold them before the presidential election,

scheduledfor 2011.

¶7. (C) The CPDC leaders pointed to linkage between President Deby's enthusiasm for domestic political reform and his sense of security from external threat and vulnerability to external pressure. Deby responded to the near-destruction of his regime by rebels and his international partners' calls for change in February 2008 by naming a new PM and reenergizing the August 13 process. Now, with the military balance turning in his favor and with diplomatic efforts to end the Chad/Sudan "proxy war" proliferating (even as Sudan is distracted by the ICC issue, South Sudan issues, etc.), the leaders expressed some puzzlement at Deby's evident lack of enthusiasm for communal and local elections, as the well-financed and GOC-supported MPS was sure to do well in any such polling.

¶8. (C) Besides the electoral process, the CPDC alleged that the GOC is not living up to the rest of the August 13 Accord, citing the continued "militarization" of territorial administration (which was supposed to be reformed and "recivilianized" the persistent politicization of the country in general, the appointment of unqualified personnel to GOC positions, and "nomadization," i.e., the constant reshuffling of bureaucrats. They also suggested that the GOC intends to take legislative action to prevent the opposition from boycotting the election, and expressed outrage at the idea, noting that voting is not mandatory in Chad.

¶9. (C) Choua alleged that the "Government of Political Opening" (Ref C) does not represent an opening at all, but rather "un gouvernement ordinaire." The four CPDC members who accepted ministerial posts in the government did so independently of the coalition, and could no longer be considered opposition members. He likewise disavowed support for armed rebellion. However, he suggested that both those who support the GOC and those that support the rebels should pressure the two camps to sit down and resolve their problems peacefully. They suggested as well that MINURCAT (the UN peacekeeping force) play an active role in helping resolve the internal political conflict.

¶10. (U) On Thursday, November 13, the CPDC rejected the changes made to the draft laws by the GOC and the National Assembly.

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COMMENT

¶11. (C) The CPDC's rejection of the changed draft laws will set back progress toward the elections, but we do not know for how long. The EU Ambassador, who is the architect of the August 13 Accord and who has been supporting the implementation process financially and operationally (Ref B), continues to predict that there will be elections in 2009, as does the French Ambassador. It is difficult to discern which side is more responsible for the lack of progress on the election calendar, whether the Deby regime is delaying the process and "playing for time" until it resolved its external security problems, or whether the Opposition's internal weakness and disunity contribute to its inability to push electoral events forward. We will continue to press the GOC and the MPS (as well as the CPDC) to work as hard as they can to ensure that these elections are held.

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